

When, the monthly "Diner des Auteurs  
SiffleV<sup>5</sup> was  
resumed in March, 1882, the two stock  
subjects of conver-  
sation, says G-oncourt, were death and  
love. And the  
hypochondriasis from which Zola was suffering,  
which had  
declared itself at the time of his mother's  
death and had  
recently compelled him to put " La Joie de  
Vivre" aside,  
now became painfully manifest. An  
unreasoning fear of  
death, and, it would seem, even of suffering  
pursued him.  
Somewhat later ( in 1885 ) and apropos of the  
terrible, lin-  
gering death of Jules Yalles, who in the midst of  
a friendly  
conversation would suddenly blanch with  
dread as if he  
could see death approaching him, Zola said  
to Goncourt:  
"Ah! to he struck down suddenly, as Flaubert  
was, that is  
the death one should desire."<sup>1</sup> This wish,  
we know, was  
ultimately granted. But in 1882, according  
to Goncourt,  
Zola, who believed that he had a complaint of  
the heart, was  
tortured by the idea of " a sudden and violent  
death which  
would fall upon him before he had finished  
his work."  
Again, we know that such a fate did ultimately  
befall him;  
but Goncourt tells us that, at the period  
we have now  
reached, the thought of it haunted him to  
such a degree  
that "since the death of his mother, whose  
coffin it had  
been necessary to bring down by way of the

window (there  
 being only a narrow, winding staircase at  
 Mddan, in spite of  
 all its embellishments), he had never since  
 been able to set  
 eyes on that window without wondering who  
 would soon be  
 lowered from it, himself or his wife. ' Yes,'  
 he said, ' since  
 that day the thought of death is always  
 lurking in our  
 minds. "We now invariably keep a light burning  
 in our bed-  
 room, and very often, when I look at my wife  
 before she

<sup>1</sup> "Jtmrnl des Goncourt," Vol. VII, p. 11.